BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Market

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate edged down 0.1 percentage points to 8.1% (seasonally adjusted) in January as labour market conditions in the province continued to improve.** The net employment gain between December and January was 32,100 (+1.7%). This was enough to absorb most of the 33,700 (+1.6%) entrants into the labour force.

  Canada's unemployment rate dropped 0.2 percentage points, to 7.8%, in January. As in BC, the decline in the unemployment rate was the result of employment growth (+0.6%) which was able to absorb a 0.4% increase in the labour force. Unemployment rates fell in most provinces. PEI (+1.0 point, to 16.4%), Saskatchewan (+0.2, to 6.5%) and Alberta (where the rate was unchanged at 5.7%) were the only exceptions. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Labour market conditions varied significantly among BC's regions.** Northeast (4.9%, 3-month moving average) continued to have the lowest unemployment rate in the province, while jobless rates remained high in the Cariboo (16.1%) and Kootenay (11.8%) regions. In the rest of BC, rates ranged from 6.8% in Mainland/Southwest to 9.9% in the Vancouver Island/Coast region.

  There are indications that Kootenay's job market may be improving. Employment was up 8.0% (3-month moving average) from the January 1998 level, marking the eleventh consecutive monthly increase. However, Cariboo, the only other region with a double-digit unemployment rate, has yet to see any signs of a turn-around. Employment was 7.0% lower than a year earlier, as the number of jobs declined for the fifth time since July. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The labour income (wages, salaries and benefits) of British Columbians was virtually unchanged (-0.1%, seasonally adjusted) in November, compared to the previous month.** Nationally, labour income rose only marginally (+0.1%). Newfoundland (+1.6%), NWT (+1.5%), Manitoba (+0.6%) and Ontario (+0.4%) were the only regions where worker's earnings showed any significant improvement. Labour income was down in PEI (-1.5%), Yukon (-0.6%) and Quebec (-0.5%). *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **The number of help-wanted ads in BC newspapers increased between December and January.** The help-wanted index rose from 118 (1996=100, seasonally adjusted) to 120 last month. Nova Scotia (+4, to 157) posted the strongest gain, followed by BC and Quebec (+2, to 146). The number of ads in newspapers increased in most provinces. The exceptions were Alberta (where the index declined 4 points, to 132), Newfoundland (-3, to 133), Saskatchewan (-1, to 130) and Ontario, where the index was unchanged at 156. Canada's help-wanted index moved up a notch, increasing from 146 in December to 147 last month. *Source: Statistics Canada*

The Economy

- **BC manufacturers surveyed in January remained somewhat pessimistic about their prospects in the first quarter of 1999.** Among those surveyed, 28% expected production to decline, while 23% anticipated increases. The balance of opinion (the difference between the percentage expecting an increase in production and those anticipating declines) on new orders was –24, with 32% anticipating declines compared to just 8% who expected orders to increase. Consistent with a generally negative outlook, 31% expected their unfilled orders to be

Report **BC part-time employment highest in Canada**

Did you know...

Canadians used their debit cards 1.36 billion times in 1998–an average of 42.9 times a second. More than 34 million debit cards are in circulation among an adult population of 21.8 million.

lower, while 7% thought they would increase. One in four (26%) manufacturers in the province expected that inventory levels would be too high, compared to 3% who said they would be too low.

Canadian manufacturers were more positive about the future. Although the balance of opinion on new orders was slightly negative (-2), most (76%, seasonally adjusted) manufacturers expected to see no change in the next three months. Seventeen percent of manufacturers anticipated increases in production, compared to 9% who foresee a decline. They were more pessimistic on inventory levels, with 16% expecting them to be too high, while 4% said they would be too low. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Department store sales in BC and the territories were 1.6% lower in December than in the same month of 1997.** Sales weakened in the latter half of 1998, after a strong start at the beginning of the year.

  BC and New Brunswick (-0.3%) were the only provinces where sales over the Christmas season did not exceed those in 1997. Canadian department store sales were up 4.7%, boosted by strong growth in both Quebec (+8.3%) and Ontario (+6.5%). *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Annual department store sales in BC and the territories edged down marginally (-0.2%) in 1998, following four years of growth.** In all other regions of the country, department stores fared better than in 1997. Sales were up 6.0% nationally, led by a 9.0% improvement in Alberta. Increases in other provinces ranged from 3.7% in New Brunswick to 7.7% in Saskatchewan.
  Source: Statistics Canada

Building Permits

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities dropped sharply (-24.4%, seasonally adjusted) in December.** The decline was the third in the last four months, and as a result, the value of permits issued in the fourth quarter was well below (-22.9%) third-quarter levels.

  Planned residential construction projects were down by a third (-34.3%), while non-residential construction permits edged back 9.1% between November and December. In the non-residential sector, planned industrial investment dropped 50.6%, while the value of commercial projects was scaled back 9.7%. However, in the institutional sector, construction plans were up 21.1%.

  Canadian permits edged down 0.4% in December, as a 2.2% decline in residential permits offset a 2.0% increase in planned non-residential projects. Manitoba (-36.0%), BC (-24.4%) and Ontario (-2.2%) were the only provinces where the value of building permits declined. Increases in the remaining provinces ranged from 2.5% in PEI to 90.1% in Newfoundland.
  Source: Statistics Canada

- **During 1998, building permits were issued for $4.8 billion of planned construction in the province, 13.2% less than in 1997, when the value of permits reached $5.5 billion.** Last year's total was the lowest since 1988. The main factor contributing to the decline in building permits was weakness in the residential market, where permits fell almost a quarter (-22.7%) to $2.8 billion. Non-residential permits were up 4.0%, largely due to a significant increase in the value of planned institutional projects (+39.0%). However, builders' plans for industrial (-4.3%) and commercial (-2.4%) projects were more modest than in 1997.

  Nationally, the value of building permits issued was up 7.2% from 1997, increasing to $33.5 billion. A 20.1% increase in the non-residential sector was the driving force behind the improvement. Residential building plans were down 2.0% from 1997. All provinces except BC and Nova Scotia (-1.7%) recorded increases, led by Manitoba (+52.6%) and Alberta (+25.6%). In the rest of the country, increases were more moderate, ranging from 5.2% in New Brunswick to 15.1% in Newfoundland. *Source: Statistics Canada*

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Infoline Report:

British Columbia part-time employment highest in Canada

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"The persistence of higher than average part-time rates over more than 20 years ... suggests causes associated with industrial or demographic features, more than shortages of full-time employment opportunities"

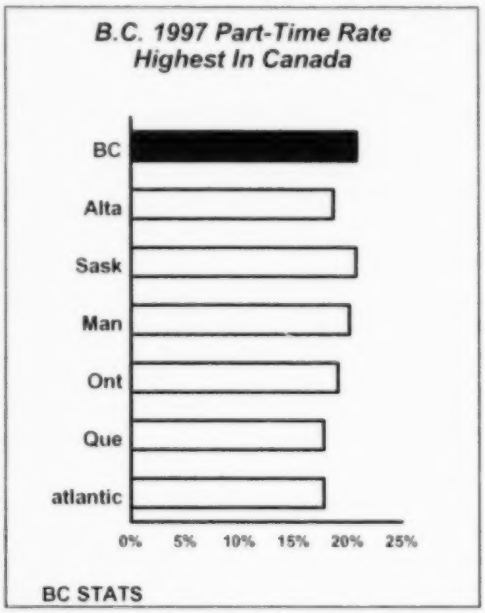
Part-time work is more common in British Columbia than in any other province. Part-time workers are defined as those who work less than 30 hours per week at their main or only job. There were 384 thousand in British Columbia in 1997, amounting to 20.9 per cent of all employed people. The province's part-time employment rate was the highest in Canada, slightly greater than the 20.8 per cent part-time employment rate for Saskatchewan, and substantially higher than the 19.0 per cent for Canada as a whole.

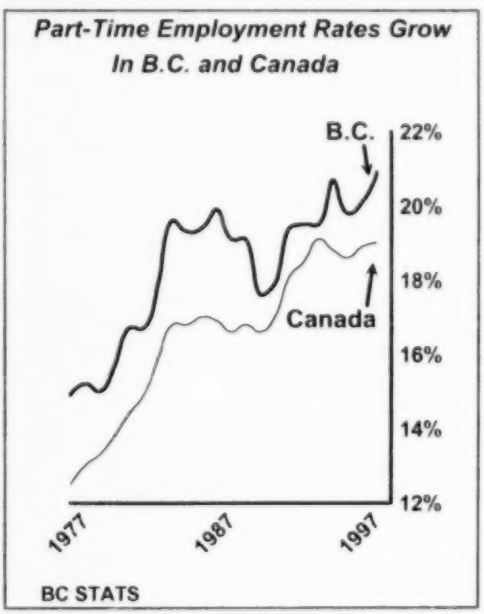
Part-time rates have been rising everywhere in Canada for at least twenty years and have accelerated during the 1990s. They have accelerated particularly sharply in British Columbia, where rates have risen from 17.9 per cent in 1990 to 20.9 per cent in 1997 - a 3.0 percentage point gain over seven years. The rise for Canada as a whole over the same period was 2.0 percentage points.

Having higher part-time rates than the rest of Canada is not new for British Columbia. Since 1976, the earliest year for which statistics are available, the province's part-time rates have been among the top three in Canada, along with Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

The persistence of higher than average part-time rates over more than 20 years in these three provinces suggests causes associated with industrial or demographic features, more than shortages of full-time employment opportunities.

This interpretation is supported by statistics on involuntary versus voluntary part-timers. In 1997, only 27 per cent of British Columbians working part-time did so involuntarily. For Saskatchewan and Manitoba the ratios were 25 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. These were the three lowest ratios for involuntary part-time work in Canada. For Canada as a whole, the ratio of involuntary part-timers to all part-





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timers was 31 per cent. In Newfoundland and New Brunswick, it reached 57 per cent and 43 per cent, respectively.

However, at least some part-time employment in all provinces is linked to the scarcity of full-time jobs. In British Columbia, and in other parts of Canada, part-time employment rates rise faster when unemployment rates are on the rise. This is what would be expected when more job seekers involuntarily take part-time work to tide them over while they are looking for full-time jobs.

Most Part-Timers in Service Industries

Part-time workers are mainly concentrated in service industries. Service industries accounted for 340 thousand out of all 384 thousand British Columbia part-time workers in 1997, 89 per cent. The largest group within this category were the 124 thousand part-time clerks and sales people working mainly in retail stores, restaurants, hotels or motels.

Other, more skilled workers included 17 thousand part-time managerial employees, and 87 thousand part-time professional workers. Together, managerial and professional employees made up 28 per cent of all part-time workers in the province.

Teaching offers considerable opportunities for part-time work in British Columbia. Among the 87 thousand professional part-time employees were 30 thousand instructors of one sort or another. These included, for example, night school instructors, tutors of all types, and high school substitute teachers.

Health and medicine is another field that has produced a great many part-time positions. In 1997, there were 24 thousand professional part-time workers in this sector engaged in activities ranging from nursing, to home care work, to ultra sound technology.

Some Industries Rely More On Part-Time Workers Than Others

The accommodation, food and beverage industry, including hotels, motels and restaurants, relied more on part-time labour than any other in British Columbia. In 1997, the part-time employment rate for this industry was 36.7 per cent. Although this was the highest rate for any industry in the province, it was low by national standards. The accommodation, food and beverage industry part-time rate for Canada as a whole was 39.3 per cent. Rates for other provinces reached as high as 44.0 per cent in Ontario and 41.7 per cent in Manitoba.

Retail trade was another industry relying heavily on part-time labour, both in British Columbia and throughout the rest of Canada. Retail industry part-time employment rates in 1997 were 29.1 per cent for British Columbia, and 32.2 per cent for Canada as a whole.

The educational services industry also relied heavily on part-time labour in British Columbia, where its part-time employment rate was 30.9 per cent. Elsewhere in Canada, the industry made much less use of part-time labour. In Canada as a whole, the part-time rate for educational services was 24.1 per cent.

Agriculture is another industry that relies more heavily on part-time labour in British Columbia than elsewhere in Canada. The part-time employment rate for agriculture in British Columbia was 26.4 per cent in 1997, the highest in Canada. It compares to a rate of 21.3 per cent in the rest of Canada. The exceptionally high part-time rate for agriculture in British Columbia could be at least partly attributable to the relatively large number of small farms in the province, some of which are operated on a part-time basis.

Relatively little part-time work is available in British Columbia's traditional forestry, fishing and mining industries. The part-time employment rate for logging and other primary forestry was 6.4 per cent in 1997. For fishing and mining it was virtually zero. In the manufacturing industry as a whole the rate was

7.0 per cent. This includes the province's paper mills and sawmills, as well the growing range of more diversified manufacturing enterprises established mainly around the lower mainland and southern Vancouver Island.

Education Helps, If You Want Full-Time Employment

University educated people are less likely than others to be working at part-time jobs.

For example, the British Columbia part-time rate for all post secondary certificate/diploma holders was 17.1 per cent, compared to 19.8 per cent for people with just high school graduation, and 33.3 per cent for those with some high school but no graduation.

More university education appears to further increase chances of finding full-time work. The lowest part-time employment rate for any educational group was for people with graduate degrees - 16.5 per cent

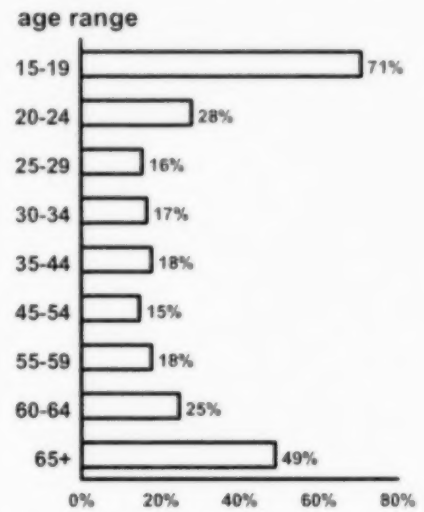
These patterns are similar in the rest of Canada, except that in other provinces there is an even stronger association between higher education and the likelihood that a person will work at a full-time job. The all Canada part-time rate for people with post secondary certificates or diplomas was 15.9 per cent, compared to 17.1 per cent in British Columbia. The all Canada rate for people with graduate degrees was 12.4 per cent, compared to 16.5 per cent in British Columbia.

Younger and Older Women Most Likely People to Be Working Part-Time

For both sexes, the people most likely to be working part-time are those under 20 years of age and those over 59. Women of all ages are much more likely to be working part-time than men.

The British Columbia part-time employment rate for women was 32.3 per cent in 1997, while the rate for men was 11.4 per cent – a very substantial gap of 20.9 percentage points. Differences between male and female part-time employment rates were slightly less severe elsewhere in Canada. For Canada as a whole, the rates were 29.4 per cent for women and 10.5 per cent for men – a gap of 18.9 percentage points.

Young and Old Workers In B.C. Have Higher Part-Time Rates



Not surprisingly, the age range showing the highest part-time rates was 15 to 19 years. Many of these people were students who needed to fit part-time work around their classroom hours. Nor is it surprising that older people are also among those most likely to be working part-time. These include many who are voluntarily reducing their hours of work as they come closer to full retirement.

Some Voluntarily Part-Time, Some Not

Most young and old people who worked part-time did so voluntarily in 1997. Across Canada, involuntary part-timers accounted for only 25 per cent of total part-timers in the 15 to 24 year age

range. For older workers, those in the 55 years and older age group, involuntary part-timers accounted for only 16 per cent of all part-timers. The ratio was higher for middle range age groups. Forty per cent of people 25 to 44 years of age who worked part-time did so voluntary. For those aged 25 to 54, the ratio was 39 per cent.

In general, women were much more likely to be working part-time voluntarily than men. Voluntary part-timers made up 76 per cent of the total for British Columbia women in 1997, and 70 per cent for Canada as a whole. Male part-timers were only 62 per cent voluntary in British Columbia, and 65 per cent voluntary in Canada as a whole.

The biggest reason for higher ratios of voluntary part-timers among women was their children. 'Caring for children' was cited as the main reason for choosing part-time work by 21 per cent of British Columbia women working part-time in 1997, and 16 per cent of women part-timers across Canada. By contrast, a negligible portion of male part-time workers cited this reason.

Women were also much more likely to let other personal or family responsibilities reduce their working hours. Personal and family responsibilities other than children were the main reason for working part-time cited by 8 per cent of female part-time workers in British Columbia, but only by 3 per cent of male part-timers.

Part-Time Work Linked To Other 'Non-Standard' Work Arrangements

The fast growth of part-time work in British Columbia and elsewhere in Canada is part of a wider trend to less traditional work arrangements. As the proportion of part-time workers in the labour force has grown, so have the proportions of self-employed workers and multiple job holders. Multiple job holders are people stringing together two or three part-time jobs. These 'non-standard' working arrangements have steadily reduced the portion of the workforce engaged in the nine to five jobs that have been the standard for so many decades.

Nowhere in Canada have non-standard working arrangements become more established than in British Columbia. British Columbia has developed Canada's highest rate of part-time employment, its highest rate of non-agricultural self-employment, and one of its highest rates of multiple job holders.

To some extent, these developments are linked. For example, some newly self-employed people worked part-time, and sometimes at more than one job. The 119 thousand multiple job holders in British Columbia included 41 thousand people who were employees in their first jobs, and self-employed in their second jobs. British Columbia has the highest rate for this type of part-time entrepreneurialism in Canada.

Infoline

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BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Oct 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	4,021.3	0.9
Canada	30,381.1	0.9
GDP and INCOME		
(BC - at market prices)	1997	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	24,775	0.1
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,340	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Nov	2,868	2.3
Merchandise Exports (raw) Nov	2,126	1.6
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Nov	2,724	-3.0
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		
(all items - 1992=100)	Dec '98	% change on one year ago
BC	109.7	0.3
Canada	108.7	1.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		
(seasonally adjusted)	Jan '99	% change on one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,096	4.2
Employed - BC	1,926	5.7
Unemployed - BC	170	-10.8
		Jan '98
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	8.1	9.5
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	7.8	8.8
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Feb 3/99	Feb 4/98
Prime Business Rate	6.75	6.50
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.40	6.40
- 5 year	6.90	6.85
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Feb 3/99	Feb 4/98
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.5134	1.4471
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6608	0.6910
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Nov '98	% change on one year ago
BC	622.69	1.8
Canada	606.40	1.1

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings } Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

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Next week

- Labour Force Statistics, January 1999
- Quarterly Regional Statistics, 4th Quarter 1998
- Tourism Room Revenue, October 1998

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